Post 6/4/78

Jackson Defends Wilkins

CHICAGO—The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson has vigorously defended former NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins, sniping at allegations that Wilkins assisted an FBI undercover campaign to discredit the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Jackson called the reports of Wilkins' involvement a "diversionary tactic by the FBI" to hide its own implication, character assassination and "perhaps physical assassination" of Dr. King." He offered no evidence.

The comments came at a press conference after publication of newly declassified FBI memos that contended that an "ambitious" black leader, identified in published reports as Wilkins' was willing to work with the bureau to "remove King from the national picture."

Wilkins has denied the substance of the allegations, though he admits meeting with the memo's author, then FBI assistant director Cartha DeLoach, in 1964.